

## Art Complex Recognized by State

By MORAG MACLACHLAN

The Massachusetts Cultural Council bestows only six projects around the state with its prestigious Gold Star designation annually. This summer, the council honored The Art Complex Museum on Alden Street for its Japanese Tea Ceremony.

"It's so incredible that out of all the programs in the whole state, they chose us," Laura Ricketson Doherty, communications coordinator of The Art Complex Museum, said.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council's Gold Star Award and an official citation from the state senate in recognition of the designation were each presented to the museum on July 16. Local cultural councils nominate programs that they have funded over the year. Lynne Smith, the former chairwoman of the Duxbury Cultural Council, nominated the Art Complex's Japanese Tea Ceremony for the award.

"The project has brought together the extraordinary resources of the Duxbury Art Complex Museum with its commitment to the Japanese Tea Ceremony, its tea hut and garden, with one of our best teachers who has a remarkable ability to share her knowledge and enthusiasm," Smith wrote in her nomination of the Art Complex.

The tea ceremony began after Chandler School second grade teacher Helen Fowler returned from a Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program funded by the Japanese. Out of the over 2,600 applications for the fellowship to Japan, Fowler was one of the 200 people accepted in the fall of 1999. A stipulation of traveling to Japan was the creation of a follow-up plan designed to share what Fowler learned abroad with her classroom, her school and her community.

Fowler said the collaboration with the Art Complex and



The Art Complex Museum's Director Charlie Weyerhaeuser, left, holds the Gold Star Award presented to the museum by the Massachusetts Cultural Council in recognition of its Japanese Tea Ceremony. Second grade teacher Helen Fowler and tea master Glenn Pereira hold the state senate's citation honoring the museum for earning the Gold Star designation.

the museum's director, Charlie Weyerhaeuser, was a natural partnership. Smith said for the past 30 years, the Art Complex has hosted public Japanese Tea Ceremonies in its Shofu or Wind in the Pines hut. During the summer of 2004, this tea ceremony was tweaked to appeal to more families by incorporating origami and scroll writing with the program.

Fowler encouraged Weyerhaeuser to take the ceremony one step forward by allowing the Chandler School's entire second grade to attend. "Charlie agreed saying 'if we start with the kids, maybe kids will then bring their parents to the museum,'" Fowler said. "He wanted to attract more families to the Art Complex."

In its seventh year now, the program not only introduces the second graders to a museum, but Japanese culture as well. Fowler said children's taste of Japan begins at the Chandler School with the teaching of a popular Japanese song called "Please Give Me Wings." The school's art teacher gives lessons on origami, while the gym teacher

shows the children an authentic Japanese dance.

Once at the museum, tea master Glenn Pereira guides the second graders through the art of the Japanese tea ceremony.

"The kids are stock still when Glenn teaches. They are so fascinated," Fowler said. "I remember watching him teach them during the first tea ceremony and he was so good with them. I asked him after he finished how often he worked with children, and I was shocked when he said that was his first time."

Word about the tea ceremony has caught on, with Marshfield schools now bringing their students to the museum to participate in the program.

"The program is a wonderful collaboration between the Duxbury schools and the Art Complex Museum. It demonstrates the role that state funding can play in the development of quality educational programming," a press release from the state cultural council said about the tea ceremony.

Even though the state's cultural council presented the award to the Art Complex in the middle of the summer, seven of the students from Fowler's second grade class, attended the event, showcasing what they learned by singing "Please Give Me Wings" in Japanese for the crowd.

"It was so impressive and it wasn't a short song either," Doherty said. "It was a tribute to Helen and this wonderful program. I really think the kids feel more comfortable coming to the museum now. It is a good introduction to the museum and what we do as well as the Japanese culture and the tea ceremony."

The Gold Star Award and the state senate's citation now sit in a display case inside the museum. The final tea ceremony will be held on Sunday, Aug. 27, at 2 p.m.



Chandler School teacher Helen Fowler approached Weyerhaeuser about allowing the town's entire second grade to visit the museum annually for the tea ceremony. Seven of Fowler's former second grade students sang the popular Japanese song "Please Give Me Wings" in Japanese to the crowd on July 16. Left to right: Chloe Sweet, KC Williams, Fowler, Madelyn Sinnott, Cammy Schiller, Lauren Healy, Christine Kales and Emma MacKinnon.

Photos by John Langmaid